proposal of the State Government of Andhra Pradesh for construction of an airport of international standards at Shamshabad near Hyderabad.

Direct air service between Kolkata and Moscow

10. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to start a direct flight from Kolkata to Moscow keeping in view the traditional bonds of friendship between India and Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether the Air India is being directed to assess the viability of the flights; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (c) Air India has at present no plan to start a direct flight from Kolkata to Moscow. Though Kolkata is available as a point of call for the designated airlines of Russia, the actual operations are left to the commercial judgement of the airline(s) concerned.

Rajkot-Delhi flight

11. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal to start Rajkot-Delhi flight *via* Surat, Jaipur has been examined by Government;

(b) if so, by when it is likely to start; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) Government has no such proposal.

(b) and (c) Government has laid down Route Dispersal Guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to

specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance of Route Dispersal Guidelines issued by Government.

Cargo handled by airports

12. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the international and domestic cargo handled by airports in the country has increased during April-October, 2002, as compared to April-October, 2001;

(b) if so, the quantum of this increase;

(c) whether new airports have done better as compared to old airports; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to improve infrastructural facilities in old airports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) There has been an average increase of 15.34% in quantum of cargo at the International Cargo Traffic at four metro airports *viz.* Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata and 67.43% at domestic airports during April to October, 2002 as compared to the corresponding period of 2001.

New airports such as Nagpur and Guwahati where cargo facilities have been provided recently have done better. However, the increase in percentage of growth at these Domestic Airports is mainly due to relatively small volume of cargo handled during previous year as compared with International Airports where cargo facilities have existed since long. Lucknow Airport though new from the view point of cargo facility has registered as negative growth of 4.7%.

Steps like introduction of Integrated Cargo Management System (ICMS), expansion of storage and processing areas, implementation of Electronic Data Interchange facilities etc. are being done at the international airports to cope up with increasing cargo volumes.